



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Influenza Activity Increasing in Utah Flu Vaccine is Still Available

(SALT LAKE CITY, UT) – According to the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) influenza activity is picking up in Utah. “While we can’t predict when the season will peak, our recent surveillance data indicate that Utah is likely to see increasing influenza activity in the near future,” said Lisa Wyman, epidemiologist with the UDOH.

The UDOH collects data on three measures or indicators which, when combined, can provide an accurate picture of influenza activity. For this year, the three primary measures are influenza-like illness from sentinel healthcare providers, school absenteeism, and hospitalized influenza cases. According to Wyman, “Our surveillance indicators are all picking up a lot of respiratory activity at this point. Influenza is definitely included”.

Currently, seven hospitalized influenza cases have been reported to public health in Davis, Salt Lake, and Weber counties. Four hospitalizations were reported during the last week. The hospitalizations have been associated with both influenza A and the more mild influenza B viruses. The majority of hospitalizations have occurred in individuals at high-risk for complications due to influenza. Current influenza activity and other information such as vaccine recommendations and disease facts are available by visiting the UDOH influenza Web page at <http://health.utah.gov/flu>. The Web site is updated every Wednesday throughout the influenza season.

“Fortunately, many providers have received their influenza vaccine supplies. It is not too late to get vaccinated,” said Linda Abel, UDOH Immunization Program Manager.

“Providers continue to receive vaccine shipments. Flu shots as well as Flu Mist – which

is given as a nasal spray - are available.” To find a flu clinic near you, visit the UDOH Flu Vaccine Locator at www.immunize-utah.org.

This year, two new audiences have been added to the groups targeted for increased influenza vaccinations: children between the ages of two and five years and all healthcare providers. Studies have shown that children up to age five are at increased risk of hospitalization if they become infected with influenza. Children with influenza often transmit the illness to close contacts, including elderly relatives at high-risk for serious complications. Also, providers are strongly encouraged to get the influenza vaccine to reduce the possibility of transmitting the virus to their patients.

Certain people are at greater risk of getting influenza and should get vaccinated every year, such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and those with kidney, lung or heart disease. In addition to getting the flu vaccine, the UDOH recommends these simple measures to reduce the risk of getting sick:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Stay away from other people when you are sick

For more information on influenza, contact the Bureau of Epidemiology at 801-538-6191.

Editorial note:

Media outlets are welcome to link to the above websites.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.